

Let's talk about ...

# News Writing



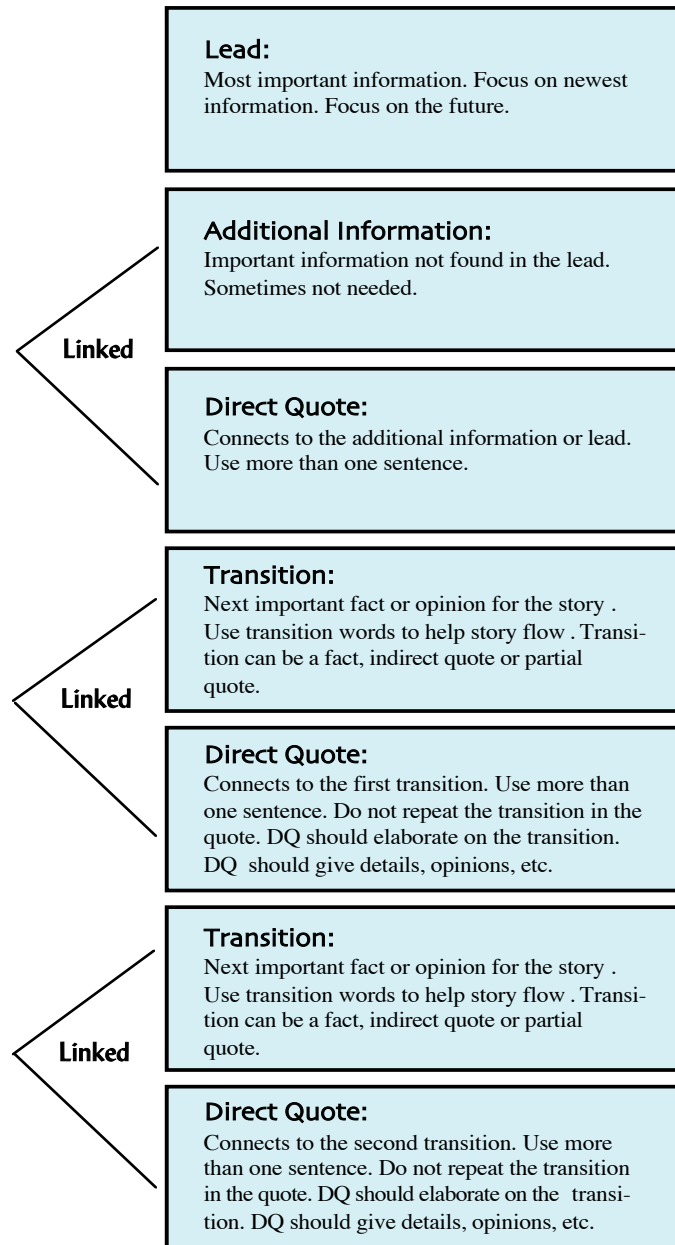
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# News Writing ...

gives the reader information that will have an impact on them in some way. It usually flows from most important to least important.

*“What is news? It is information only.” -  
Walter Cronkite, former CBS News  
anchor*

# Transition/Quote Formula



**Side Notes:**  
1) Each box is a new a paragraph.  
2) Story should flow from most important to least important information.

and so on... until the story is complete

**Let's start at  
the beginning  
with ... LEADS.**

Let's talk about

# Leads



# Lead:

Most important information. Focus on newest information. Focus on the future.

Question to ask yourself:

What do my readers need to know most???

# Leads

Most leads for the News Writing Contest should be summary leads. That means they summarize the 5 Ws and H of the story, starting off with the most important W or H.

# Types of News Leads:

## Rarely use these...

**“Who lead”** - begins with a person. The person is usually not the most important fact of the story.

**“When lead”** - begins with time. Rarely is the time the most important factor.

**“Where lead”** - begins with the place. Hardly ever is where the most important factor.



# **Types of News Leads:**

**Use these often...**

**“How lead”** - begins with the how of the story.  
Used often.

**“Why lead”** - begins with the cause the story.  
Used often.

**“What lead”** - begins with the fact of the story.  
Used often.

# Who lead

## Definitely NO!

School Board President Joe Blow announced Tuesday that students will no longer be allowed to leave campus for lunch due to excessive tardies.

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## Maybe... probably yes.

Award-winning country singer George Strait will perform a concert at the high school Thursday after giving a speech at the County Expo Center.



Question:

Do we use this type of lead often? Why?

# When lead

## Definitely no!

On Tuesday, Principal Joe Blow announced that students will no longer be able to leave campus for lunch.

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## Maybe (probably not)...

On Thursday, President Barack Obama will speak to the senior class about how important community organizing and volunteering are to the country.



Question:

How often do we use this type of lead?

# Where lead

## Definitely no!

At the school board meeting on Tuesday, Principal Joe Blow announced that he has ended the off-campus lunch policy.

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## Maybe ... probably yes.

In the principal's office, the senior class dumped 30 pounds of sand to protest the cancellation of the senior trip to Cancun.



Question:  
Why is this type of lead rarely used?

# How lead

Through a grass roots voting effort, senior Gilbert Castillo won the mayoral election to become the youngest mayor in the city's history.

# Why lead

In the wake of the bleacher collapse at the stadium, the location for the district track meet has moved to Southside High School, and the district is looking for an alternate graduation site.

# What lead

The community has the chance to speak on the proposed coffee bar at the school board meeting Thursday night.

# **Now that we know the type of lead we are looking for, how do we write a good lead?**

- read the entire prompt
- find the newest information in the prompt
- beware of older, more controversial news
- write one to two sentences summarizing the “new” news including as many other Ws and H as possible
- write in third person, concise and to the point — just the facts, ma’am
- leave out the word ‘Leaguetown’ unless necessary for understanding



# News Writing

District 2 Meet • 2013



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. From the given information, write a **news story** as you would for the high school newspaper. You may use statements attributed to individuals as **direct or indirect quotes**. You may not change the meaning of a statement. You have **45 minutes**. Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number NOT YOUR NAME on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School, located in East Texas, has 1,300 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Over the winter break, school nurse Ema Stilten died in a car accident. Stilten was 63 and had been the school nurse for 32 years.

Since the spring semester began, a teacher's aide has been working part-time in the nurse's office to distribute medicine and monitor ill students. Principal Stella Reeves proposed the school continue with a part-time aide in the nurse's office for next year and use the savings to hire another teacher. Because of teacher cuts over the past two years, the average class size is 29, up from 25 in 2010.

The faculty unanimously supports this proposal, but Reeves has not received overwhelming support from parents and students. One group of parents labeled the proposal "short-sighted and dangerous." Pen Giller, the school board president, said this decision is a school decision, and the board will not interfere. Reeves said she will hold a parent meeting next Thursday, April 4, before she submits the school budget for next year. You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed Monday, April 1.

## ■ STELLA REEVES, principal

"The school sustained a great loss when Nurse Stilten died. She was an institution at this school. I would have never considered replacing her were she still here. But unfortunately, she's not, and we must move forward.

"In January we struggled to find a qualified applicant to replace her, so we asked one of our part-time teacher aides if she would go full-time until we found someone. I never imagined this would become a permanent solution, but Betty Figs is doing an excellent job balancing both the classroom and nurse's office. She is very organized and handles all issues professionally and efficiently. We have not received a single complaint about the change.

"It actually wasn't my idea to continue with this plan. It was Ms. Figs. She loves the additional duties and feels more than competent to continue next year. Ms. Figs raised six children, so she knows a little about sick teenagers. Plus, she agreed to seek additional training this summer.

"I thought the parents would jump on board with this proposal. It will decrease our class sizes and benefit students directly. Right now our English classes average 33 students each. That's more than 150 students for each English teacher. It's not an ideal situation.

"The teachers are thrilled with the plan, even though only one or two departments will reap the benefits. I am happy to meet with parents to hear their concerns. This is not a done deal, but our teachers need some relief in the classroom. I will try to work with parents to find a solution that makes everyone happy."

■ **BETTY FIGGS, teacher's aide and substitute nurse**

"I love my new role at the school. I get to interact with so many more students and build relationships. The nurse's office isn't that busy. I usually see a few students each day with headaches or stomach issues, but most of my job is distributing medicine. We have several students who take medication daily; so my job is to hold the medicine and make sure the student gets it at the appropriate time.

"When something major happens, we call parents or EMS. I have had to call EMS once this year when a student had a negative reaction to medicine he took at home."

■ **YVONNE GUTIERREZ, English teacher**

"Teachers love Ms. Reeves' proposal. We need all the help we can get reducing our numbers, and it doesn't look like funding is going to increase for next school year. I loved Ms. Stiltner. She was the nurse when I went to high school here. I certainly miss her. Honestly, we do not need a full-time school nurse. Our students know when they are sick. They can call their parents or their own doctor. If we were an elementary school, then maybe we would need a full-time nurse. Our students are older and independent. They don't need a nurse to tell them they have a stomach virus. These parents need to understand how tough it is to teach 31 kids in one class and grade 164 essays. The workload is too much."

■ **RAQUEL SIMONES, parent**

"I cannot support this proposal. We need a full-time school nurse on campus. I have a special needs child, and if he suffers a seizure at school, I want a certified nurse there to respond. We were lucky he had a good spring. I understand teacher loads are high, and budgets are tight. Everyone has to step up and do a little more with a little less. We should not compromise the safety of our students so teachers can have fewer papers to grade. I hope we can change Ms. Reeves' mind."

■ **GIGI SMITH, junior**

"I have a brother who will be a freshman next year. He has severe food allergies. If he starts to go into anaphylaxis, we need a school nurse to give him his EpiPen shot. Without it, he could die. A nurse is trained to deal with this medical condition. A teacher's aide isn't. I like Ms. Figgs, but she could panic. That would be very bad for my brother. Last year, he had two severe reactions at school, but the nurse was quick to give him his shot. We need a full-time, certified nurse."

■ **SANTIAGO DE LA GARZA, sophomore**

"I like Ms. Figgs. She is really sweet and will help anyone, but we need a full-time nurse. Three fewer students in one class isn't going to make much difference. A nurse will. When I broke my leg my freshman year, Ms. Stiltner convinced my parents I needed to go the hospital. She could feel the break. I don't get to go to the doctor very often, so when I have a medical question, I would always go to the school nurse."

# Why lead

After getting backlash from her proposal to eliminate the nursing position in the 2013-14 budget, Principal Stella Reeves agreed to meet with parents next Thursday before finalizing the budget.

# What lead

Before finalizing the budget next Thursday, Principal Stella Reeves will meet with parents over her proposal to eliminate the nurses' position for 2013-14.

Let's talk about

# Direct Quotes



# Direct Quotes:

➤ Should be linked to the paragraph before them. The quote should elaborate on the previous paragraph.

## **For example:**

After long-time school nurse Ema Stilten died in a car accident in December, part-time teacher aide Betty Figgs covered Stilten's responsibilities. Impressed with Figgs' competence, Reeves proposed keeping Figgs to avoid hiring a new nurse. With the savings, Reeves wants to hire a new teacher — a move supported by teachers.

“I thought the parents would jump on board with this proposal,” Reeves said. “It will decrease our class sizes and benefit students directly. Right now our English classes have an average of 33 students each.”

# Next transition

Parent Raquel Simones said the school should not compromise student safety simply to give teachers a few less papers to grade.

**What comes next? From whom?**

# **Direct quote – elaborates on previous transition**

Parent Raquel Simones said the school should not compromise student safety simply to give teachers a few less papers to grade.

“I have a special needs child who is quite fragile,” Simones said. “If he suffers a seizure at school, I want a certified nurse to help him.”

**What follows this?**



## **More transitions and quotes (linked)**

Junior GiGi Smith said she also believes the school needs a full-time, certified nurse. Her brother, who will be a freshman next year, has a severe peanut allergy.

“A nurse is trained to deal with this medical condition,” Smith said. “A teacher’s aide isn’t. I like Ms. Figgs, but she could panic. That would be very bad for my brother.”

Figgs said most of her job is distributing prescribed medicine to students and seeing a few students with headaches or stomach aches.

“When something major happens, we call parents or EMS,” she said. “I only had to call EMS once this year when a student had a negative reaction to medicine he took at home.”

# Direct Quotes:

- Should not repeat the transition/lead before them.

For example:

Figgs said most of her job is distributing prescribed medicine to students.

“Most of what I do is distribute medicine to students,” she said.

# Direct Quotes:

- Can be longer than one sentence.
- Should have attribution after the first sentence of the quote.
- Attribution should be: Noun then verb.

For example:

Correct - senior Bob Rodriguez said.

Incorrect - said senior Bob Rodriguez.

*(unless you have an unusually long title)*

- Do not place two people's direct quotes next to each other without a transition.

Let's talk about  
**Transitions**



# Transitions

- VERY, VERY IMPORTANT. Hold the story together. Link the paragraphs together.
- Can be fact, indirect quote or a partial quote.

For example - **FACT TRANSITION:**

After long-time school nurse Ema Stilten died in a car accident in December, part-time teacher aide Betty Figgs covered Stilten's responsibilities. Impressed with Figgs' competence, Reeves proposed keeping Figgs to avoid hiring a new nurse. With the savings, Reeves wants to hire a new teacher — a move supported by teachers.

# Transitions

- Can be fact, indirect quote or a partial quote.

For example - **INDIRECT QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(IQ Transition) Parent Raquel Simones said the school should not compromise student safety simply to give teachers a few less papers to grade.

# Transitions

➤ Can be fact, indirect quote or a partial quote.

For example - **PARTIAL QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(PQ Transition) Reeves said Figgs has done “an outstanding” job since she took over the nurse’s job.

# Transitions

➤ Use transitional words to help with the flow (as needed): After all, Also, Finally, In addition, However, Otherwise, Then

For example:

**In addition** to cutting the nursing position, Reeves suggested decreasing the number of bus routes.



# Transitions

➤ Use parts of the direct quotes to create the transition. And then use the rest of the quote as direct quote.

# For example

- Stella Reeves, principal

“In January we struggled to find a qualified applicant to replace her, so we asked one of our part-time teacher aides if she would go full-time until we found someone. I never imagined this would become a permanent solution, but Betty Figgs is doing an excellent job balancing both the classroom and nurse’s office. **She is very organized and handles all issues professionally and efficiently. We have not received a single complaint about the change.**

“It actually wasn’t my idea to continue with this plan. It was Ms. Figgs. She loves the additional duties and feels more than competent to continue next year. Ms. Figgs raised six children, so she knows a little about sick teenagers. **Plus, she agreed to seek additional training this summer.**”

## The Transition

**The school has not received a single complaint about Figgs since she took over the nurse’s job, Reeves said.**

## Direct Quote

**“She is very organized and handles all issues professionally and efficiently,” Reeves said. “Plus, she agreed to additional training this summer.”**

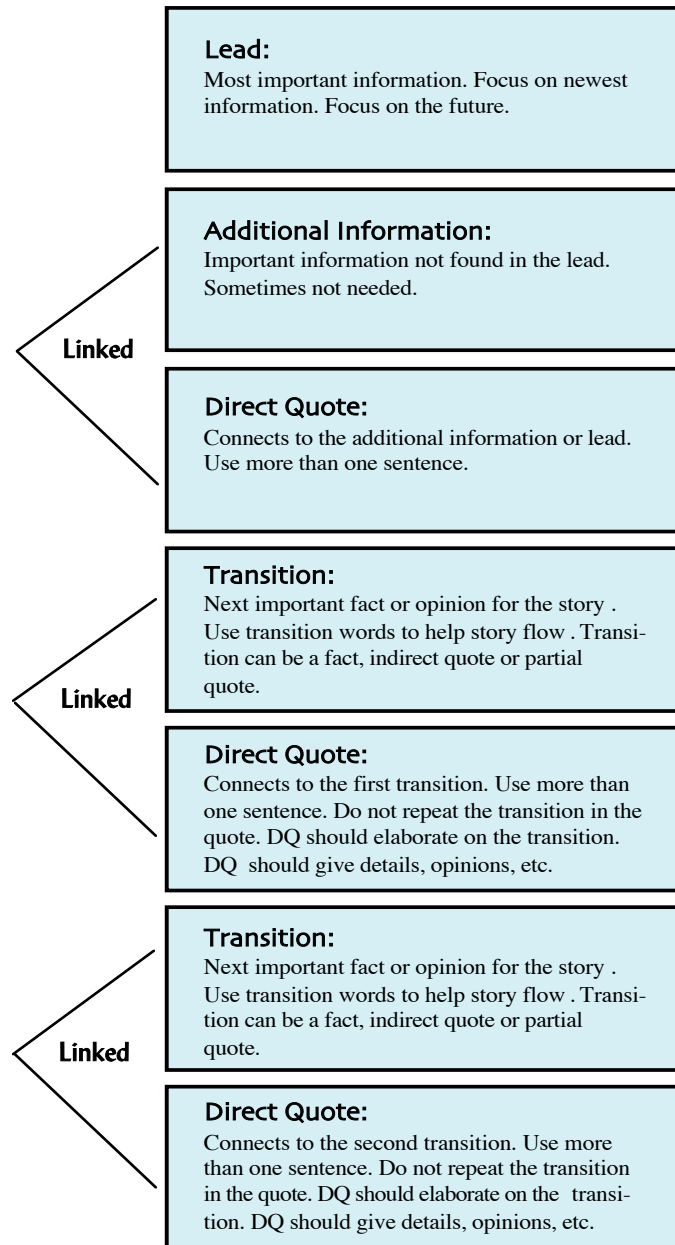
# Let's Review ...

What types of leads should you use more?

Where should you place the attribution for a direct quote?

How many sentences can a direct quote be?

## Transition/Quote Formula



and so on... until the story is complete

Following a transition, what should a direct quote do?

**Side Notes:**  
1) Each box is a new a paragraph.  
2) Story should flow from most important to least important information.

What can a transition be?

What is the purpose of the transition?

What can you use to create transitions?

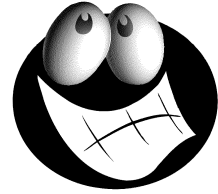
# No-nos for News Stories

- Using the word “Leaguetown”
- Starting with “The School Board ...”
- Writing a feature lead
- Adding facts
- Putting attribution before the quote
- Missing the news peg
- Missing important information and people
- Stacking quotes
- Forgetting to use student quotes

# Checklist for News Stories

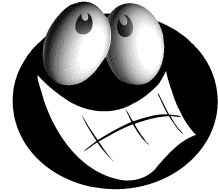
- ✓ Are the most important and recent facts first?
- ✓ Is the story accurate? Are the sources identified fully?
- ✓ Are the paragraphs short?
- ✓ Is the sentence structure varied in the story?
- ✓ Is the story neat and double-spaced so that it is easy to read?
- ✓ Does your story flow? Did you use the transition/quote formula?
- ✓ Did you use active voice?

# What will make the difference?



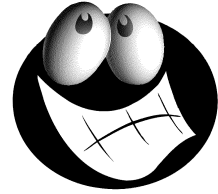
- Getting the news peg in the lead

# What will make the difference?



- Using the T/Q formula

# What will make the difference?



- Using the “correct” sources and quotes



# Pitfalls to Avoid

- Editorializing - Keep your opinion out of the story
- Using first and second person - Keep yourself out of the story. Common error: “our school”
- Messy handwriting, poor grammar and spelling
- Paragraphs too long
- Misspelling names in the story
- Trying to use all of the information

# What went wrong?

At Leaguetown High School about 35 students skipped at least one period each school day. The assistant principals said many of the skippers hide in bathrooms, outside the school or in their cars.

In an effort to reduce truancy, all students will receive new school IDs with built-in tracking devices on April 2, but one parent is working with the American Civil Liberties Union to stop the use of such devices.

“This is a blatant violation of my son’s privacy rights,” said parent Don Cantrell. “He doesn’t want someone watching him at all times. No child in the United States should be tagged or tracked.”

But Strobinski, who proposed the new IDs, doesn’t understand the concerns.

She said, “We will never use the tracking device on them [students] unless they are skipping class or there is an emergency of some type. Plus, the tracking only works at the school.”

With the new IDs, administrators will be able to track our students for a range of 200 yards from the principal’s office.

“Students will be less likely to skip if they know we can find them quite easily,” Strubinski said. “Students should not have any concerns if they don’t skip class.”

“Students who have never skipped should not have to wear such an ID,” sophomore Johnny Rains said.

# Contest Day

1. Read the entire prompt.
2. Review it again, looking for the newest information. Underline that information.
3. Highlight or underline the 5Ws and H.
4. Highlight or underline the most important people interviewed. Highlight or underline the most essential quotes.
5. Scratch out stupid, inane quotes.
6. Pay attention to the “Additional Information.”
7. Write your lead. How, why or what lead.

# Contest Day

8. Write an additional info. paragraph if needed.
9. Use a direct quote (more than one sentence is okay).
10. Write a transition about the next most important thing.
11. Use a direct quote directly related to the transition above. If it's an indirect quote transition, use a direct quote from that same person.
12. Write another transition about the next most important thing.
13. Another direct quote.
14. Keep going.

# Let's practice!



- Get in groups of four to five
- Follow the steps from “Contest Day”
- Write as much as you can. Edit. Write. Edit.

**Did you get the  
news peg?**

